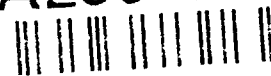


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# STUDY PROJECT

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## MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM: THE ARMY OFFICER OF THE 90s

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN N. SCHORNICK  
United States Army

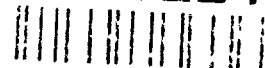
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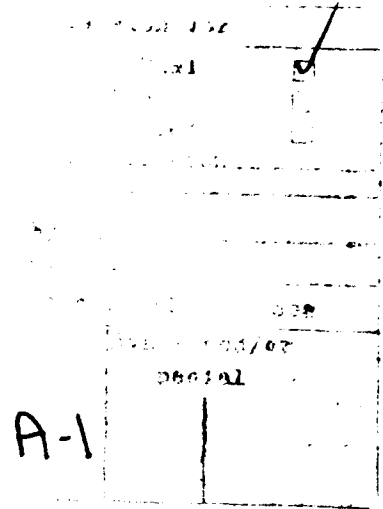
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## Abstract

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Performance and behavior standards required of the professional Army officer have been with the Army system for over 200 years. Most officers have been successful in maintaining these standards at a high and acceptable level; some have not. The 1990s will present many challenges, both old and new, to the Army officer. A much smaller Army, a reduced budget, a forever-changing world threat, and the continuing need for advanced technology, all warrant the best efforts from the officer corps. In addition, the officer's ability to work effectively with the political infrastructure on the needs of the Army is becoming important. The need for increased technical competence in key areas will require the professional officer to exhibit great versatility. The professional officer may be required to perform as a warrior, a technologist, and as a politically astute person. These skill-related standards are critical, but they are not the only ones required of a professional. Qualitative standards such as ethical behavior, moral conduct, and caring leadership also play an integral part in an officer's everyday responsibilities.

## MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM: THE ARMY OFFICER OF THE 90s

### INTRODUCTION

Professional standards of performance and behavior have been required of the Army officer for over 200 years. Challenges in maintaining these standards continually face the officer. The 1990s will have many challenges also, challenges which warrant the very best effort from the officer corps in meeting its responsibilities to the Army.

The United States Army has the responsibility of training, equipping, and leading soldiers in support of national defense, and in the maintenance of U.S. interests throughout the world. The Army officer has always played a leading role in the fulfillment of this responsibility. To help meet this responsibility the American people have vested in the Army officer specific authority over soldiers, their equipment, and numerous other key resources, to include money.<sup>1</sup>

Along with this authority, the officer corps places great emphasis on expounding the traditional belief in duty-honor-country. This belief is considered by many to be the basic fiber that provides the strength in the molding of a professional officer.

In addition to this authority and belief, the officer also possesses certain technical skills that pertain to his or her chosen military specialty. Thus, through prolonged training and education, and many years of experience, the officer will acquire and develop the technical skills necessary to serve in combat,

combat support, and combat service support assignments. These type skills equate to quantitative standards, the standards associated with measurements of proficiency.

Professional officers rely on this vested authority, their belief in duty-honor-country, and their proficiency with certain technical skills to meet the daily challenges of their profession. They alone, however, are not enough to ensure the total success of a professional officer. They need to be blended with a sense of group identity, a strong foundation of ethics and morals, and sincere dedication to quality leadership. In other words, it is necessary for the Army officer to exhibit competence in the qualitative standards of performance and behavior as well. By qualitative I mean the accepted rules or models of the group that have recognized and permanent value. When extreme competence and confidence is demonstrated by the officer corps in all the areas just discussed, the officer corps emulates military professionalism.

In the 1990s, we, the professional officers, face the challenge of meeting our responsibilities with a much reduced force structure, with a smaller budget, and in a world filled with a multitude of threats that may or may not affect our vital interests. Considering the magnitude of these challenges, it seems appropriate that we revisit the subject of military professionalism to see what will be needed to enhance the success of the officer corps. During this visit, we will limit our focus only to selected technical skills and certain qualitative standards of performance and behavior.

### TECHNICAL COMPETENCE REQUIRES VERSATILITY

The majority of our professional officers need technical competence in three key areas or environments: one as a warrior, another as a technologist, and finally one as a politically astute leader.

The warrior can be found throughout our history. This is the one who studies and comprehends tactics, intelligence, logistics, and the know-how to effectively employ the proper resources at the proper time to win battles and wars. This has always been, and will always be, the most critical task for officer leadership. In 1985, the Army published a special issue of Commanders Call entitled, "The Professional Development of Officers Study." This document specified the need for the officer to have a "warrior spirit" as a foundation for professional development. Officers with this spirit act as follows:

Officers accept the responsibility of being entrusted with protection of the Nation; are prepared physically and mentally to lead units to fight and support in combat; are skilled in the use of weapons, tactics, and doctrine; inspire confidence and an eagerness to be part of the team; have the ability to analyze, the vision to see, and the integrity to choose, and the courage to execute.<sup>3</sup>

A much smaller Army is but one of the many challenges that will confront this warrior spirit in the 1990s. In addition, the threat scenario envisioned for the world will probably be of the same magnitude that faces our larger Army of today. The Army could find itself engaged in conflicts ranging from the deserts of Southwest Asia to the jungles of Central America. We must

also keep in mind that many Third World countries are growing in both economic and military strength, while at the same time several are encountering major internal strife. Military and political planners alike have concluded that a forward-deployed U.S. military throughout the world will soon be history, and although we will still maintain a military presence, the bulk of the Army will be CONUS based. A smaller, but highly lethal and rapidly deployable force will be the trademark of the Army. All these challenges will affect U.S. vital interests, which in turn will place extra demands on the expertise, flexibility and leadership of the warrior.

The warrior has been a part of our history for a long time, but so too has the world of technology. Today's Army officer serves in a high-technology environment, using equipment that earlier generations only dreamed about to achieve mastery of a battlefield that may extend over great distances or may be localized.<sup>4</sup> Technological advances encompassing the vision and imagination of many people have been designed to improve the overall capability of soldiers, and thus enhance the probability of their success. The repeating rifle, the M-1 tank, and the Apache helicopter, and quantum improvements with air defense artillery are well-known technological advances in warfare that have contributed to our successes on the battlefield.

The 1990s and beyond will bring about even more advances. Some of these may be needed to compensate for the manpower reductions directed by Congress. We need to stress decreasing the timeliness of the application of technological innovations to



the military purposes for which they are designed. Increased familiarity by the professional officer is paramount not only in the effective use of weapons and supporting technology, but also in its production and procurement. Technology itself is not a simple fix for soldiers and their leaders. It is becoming very important for the officer to first understand the requirements that make technological improvements necessary, and then to know when and how to apply the technology. Success will center on the officer who knows how to effectively manage the ever-increasing sophistication of modern technology.

A very key element in technology acquisition in the 1990s will be the availability of dollars. A much reduced military budget will cause the decision makers involved with technology to be uniquely aware of what is needed to help ensure the continued readiness of the Army, no matter what its size.

This brings us to the third key area requiring technical competence, the one involving political astuteness. Competence in the political arena is becoming increasingly important. I am of the opinion that certain Army officers acquire a reputation of becoming political once they reach the rank of colonel. Having a reputation for being political and actually possessing the capability to work successfully with the political infrastructure are entirely different.

One need only look back at the challenges that arose as General Marshall advised Congress and President Roosevelt during World War II. Although he was very successful in his efforts, General Marshall, along with many of his associates, was severely

criticized for his failure to think politically about what was going on in Europe.<sup>5</sup> General Marshall believed that political matters should remain totally with political leaders, and that military operations should be left entirely in the hands and minds of military commanders. On the other hand, General Omar Bradley thought certain military leaders foolishly ignored political issues of immense importance.

We saw frustration and almost total ineffectiveness on the part of military leaders when advising Congress and President Johnson on the prosecution of the Vietnam War. The war could have been won, many insist, if U.S. power had been used wisely, decisively, and without limit. Others conclude that timid, ignorant, civilian leaders prevented the military from winning.<sup>6</sup> When one takes a closer look at this particular time in our history, the ineffectiveness in the overall prosecution of the Vietnam War was probably due to the application of conventional military means in the absence of any clear strategy or stated political goals.

The common denominator that appears in these examples is basic ignorance, or more politely put, a lack of understanding on the part of both parties. In contrast, the professional handling of Operation Desert Storm by General Colin Powell, Mr. Dick Cheney, President George Bush, and to some degree, certain members of Congress, clearly demonstrates that the common denominator between the military and the politicians can be knowledge and understanding. This group of professionals exhibited tremendous expertise and teamwork, proof that leaders

need to prepare themselves for a full array of responsibilities.

With the high probability of more politicians entering the halls of Congress possessing little or no military experience, and with many senior Army officers having spent most of their time at the troop level and not at the national level, a certain lack of understanding will remain. The political infrastructure that oversees the military needs to be continually made aware of what exactly are the roles, capabilities, limitations, and needs of the Army. Awareness and knowledge of all the instruments of national power by those elected to employ them is appropriate.

The Army, on the other hand, must develop its professional leaders so they are able to intellectually grasp the political issues that affect our profession. With both professions doing their part to learn more, we can help ensure that responsible, intelligent decisions affecting the Army and the country will be made based on knowledge and understanding, not on ignorance and misunderstanding.

Overcoming ignorance and misunderstanding of the Army's role involves another profession as well. The relationship between the Army, and the military as a whole, and the news media has come a long way over the last 20 years. Progress has been made thanks mainly to the leaders of both professions taking time to learn about each other. The common denominator during Operation Desert Storm, although some work still needs to be done, was based on an earnest desire from both professions not only to learn, but also to cooperate. The Army leadership of

this operation set the example for the future military leadership of the Army in media relations.

In summary, the Army officer has always had the requirement to maintain a competent level of technical expertise. Looking at the 1990s this requirement will be even greater due to such challenges as the ever-increasing sophistication of technological advances and the need for the professional officer to gain expertise in working effectively with the political infrastructure.

#### PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CARING LEADERSHIP REQUIRE SINCERITY

We must be aware, however, of the concept of professionalism attached to the long-standing view that military training and military skills alone produce the best professionals.<sup>7</sup> Acquiring individual competence in these areas is of prime importance and every effort must be made by the officer to attain this competence. Professionalism, however, also involves the necessity for belief in and demonstration of other standards such as caring leadership, ethical and moral behavior, strong personal values, and gaining the unyielding trust and confidence of the soldier. These qualitative standards, along with those of individual competence, are inextricably related, interactive, and mutually reinforcing.<sup>8</sup> They are the yardsticks by which the soldier measures the success of the leader.

A study of military professionalism was conducted in 1970 by the U.S. Army War College. This study was made at the

direction of the Army Chief of Staff, General William Westmoreland, because of grave and increasing concerns over the state of the discipline, integrity, morality, ethics, and overall professionalism in the officer corps. In essence, the study was to assess the professional climate, to identify any problem areas, and to formulate corrective actions. Even though the Army was going through the throes of the Vietnam War, the study found officers from all ranks deeply aware of what is meant by professional standards, and most intolerant of peers and seniors whom they believe were substandard in maintaining them. Many of those surveyed voiced disappointment with the large numbers of peers and superiors alike who did not believe in or demonstrate all the standards expected of a professional. Technical competence alone was not enough. (See Appendix A.)

In 1984, another study on Army Professionalism was conducted at the U.S. Army War College. This was a 15-year update of the 1970 study, and the goal was to replicate the 1970 study and compare results. Once again, the study dealt with the entire gamut of officer professionalism. This 1984 study painted a more positive picture of officer professionalism than was found in the 1970 study. Although there were still problems with some officers not emulating what is expected, the officer corps appeared to be "on track."

In this study we see a concerted effort at establishing what was expected of Army officers in regards to their performance and behavior. One question asked of the groups surveyed was, "What are the professional standards or values that

have traditionally been set forth for the officer?" The responses, which came from junior and senior officers alike, included quality leadership, high ethical and moral behavior, strong personal values such as honesty and integrity, and, of course, technical competence.

A follow-on question dealt with the standards that existed in the profession. The majority of responses showed a perception on the part of many officers that there was a difference between what is expected and what is actually demonstrated by certain members of the officer corps. The respondents further indicated the absence of tolerance for those officers who fail to match these standards, although some felt that those who had the power to correct such a violation did not, for whatever reason. (See Appendix B.)

It is quite clear from both of these studies, and from personal experiences as well, that there is indeed more to being a professional officer than just exhibiting technical competence. The effectiveness of the officer corps requires a proper balance between technical competence and professional standards of performance and behavior.

#### FOCUS FOR THE 1990s

So during the past 20 years the Army officer corps has made it known, on at least two different occasions, that its profession has well-established qualitative standards for both performance and behavior, that they are essential, and that they should be enforced.

Now the officer corps moves into the 1990s preparing to lead a much smaller Army, an Army which has less money for needed technology, and a complex threat environment. The warrior, technologist, and politically astute officer will succeed in meeting these challenges by drawing on not only technical competence, but also on those qualitative standards of performance and behavior that have been so essential in keeping our profession strong, respected, and successful.

As the Army becomes smaller, thousands of dedicated and well-qualified soldiers will be forced to leave the ranks. Most of them will not wish to leave, nor are they prepared to do so. It will take a tremendous amount of caring leadership from the officer in assisting this soldier during his or her transition to civilian life. The officer who has shown relentless effort and consistency in maintaining the personal well-being of soldiers will probably find the soldier more willing to listen and act responsibly. The soldier will do this out of respect for the caring leader. Baron von Steuben gave the following advice to his officers in 1778: "gain the love of your men, treat them with kindness and humanity, and attend to everything that may contribute to their health and conscience."<sup>9</sup> We must not forget these soldiers are part of the team until the day they depart. They deserve to be treated as such.

Ethical conduct within our profession requires continuous focus from every officer. "Ethics" is the discipline dealing with what is good and bad, and with moral duty and obligation. It is the behavior expected of individuals in conforming to

culturally based guidelines. Ethics also presume that individuals actively seek enlightenment about their moral values and critically examines their behavior in that light.<sup>10</sup>

Acceptable ethical behavior has always been expected of military officers. This same behavior will be expected in the 1990s as well. This expectation is real, and when a violation occurs the reputation of the entire officer corps pays the price. No matter the challenge, ethical considerations will confront the officer.

Forming an ethical framework to assist the officer during the critical decision-making process is essential. This framework should be based on three considerations: (1) loyalty and duty in preserving the Constitution and protecting the United States, (2) commitment to preserving and enhancing human life, and (3) in assuring that integrity is interwoven between the "means and the end." It is the professional interpretation of an officer's ethical conduct and moral values that influences his or her own sense of morality and ethics. The officer corps needs to maintain a professional climate where ethical soundness is both understood and accepted.

The warrior, technologist, and politically astute officer must also be unrelenting in loyalty, fearless in courage, and steadfast in candor when he or she, "tells it like it is" when preparing the smaller Army for the variety of missions it will face. Officers must prepare themselves to personally assist in estimating the capabilities, limitations, and goals of the threat as they apply to our use of this smaller force in support of our



national goals. This will take continuous study and persistence. The officer must know what is right for the soldier, the Army, and the country.

Perhaps in our efforts to revisit military professionalism and how it will apply in the 1990s it would be wise to mention trust. The importance of an officer establishing a bond of trust with not only subordinates, but with peers and the civilian leadership as well cannot be overlooked. Leaders who are trusted are leaders who are followed. This trust has emerged from a demonstration of professional competence in both performance and behavior. It is our duty to ensure that this trust is not degraded in any way.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is a need for the warrior to continually gain expertise in numerous technical areas. So too is there a need for the warrior to stay intellectually abreast of and effectively manage the sophisticated advances in technology. We have seen officers deal successfully with the political infrastructure that oversees our profession. The need for our professional officers to continually gain competence in this area is of prime importance. And last, but certainly not least, the officer must sincerely believe in and earnestly exhibit those qualitative standards of caring leadership, binding trust, sound ethical conduct and moral behavior, and an acceptable values system.

The success the officer corps finds in the 1990s will certainly be enhanced when the professional officer demonstrates proficiency as a warrior, as a manager of technology, and as a politically astute leader. Total success will not be a reality, however, unless the officer is sincerely dedicated to abiding by those qualitative standards of military professionalism that have proven so invaluable in meeting the many challenges in our historic past.

There is no greater responsibility in America than that of leading soldiers in the defense of freedom. In the 1990s, and beyond, soldiers expect and deserve to have as their leaders the very best professional officers that can be produced; professional officers who will ensure, no matter the challenge, that the means to the end is important.

## APPENDIX A

Selected narrative comments from officers surveyed during the 1970 U.S. Army War College study on military professionalism. Questionnaires were distributed to approximately 420 officers ranging in grade from second lieutenant to major general.<sup>11</sup>

### Standards

- CPT: The young men in the Army today need and expect their leaders to set standards of moral behavior.
- CPT: Senior officers seem to live under the standards of "do as I say, not as I do."
- MAJ: Pride in profession promotes professionalism. Renewed effort on the part of commanders to emphasize Army tradition and formality would, in my opinion, aid in developing and maintaining the needed esprit de corps.
- MAJ: The biggest failing is setting the example in the 10-20 year service majors and lieutenant colonels who simply are waiting out the retirement requirements.
- COL: The military must take action to overcome its willingness to accept mediocrity.
- COL: The Army encourages "freeloaders" particularly in the middle grades.
- CPT: There are too many nonprofessional, incompetent, hangers-on in the Army.
- COL: Discipline is the foundation of the Army . . . but somehow it is deteriorating.
- MAJ: My experience has been that line units operate better at cadre strength of high caliber than full strength of a mix of high and mediocre caliber officers.
- COL: Senior officers fail to set the example by adhering to standards of duty-honor-country. Many a subordinate has been sacrificed to advance the career of a senior.
- MAJ: There is ample evidence of high level (including generals) moral laxness which in no way is reflected in promotions or assignment limitations or sanctions.
- MAJ: My superior was a competent, professional, knowledgeable military officer that led by fear, would double-cross anyone to obtain a star, drank too much and lived openly by no moral code.

COL: Too much attention is being given by the Army, through its undue emphasis and policies as well as by individuals, on personal advancement or "ticket punching." Our professionalism as soldiers has thereby been degraded.

COL: So long as an officer is held personally responsible for seeing that no mistakes are made by his subordinates he will have difficulty passing authority to them.

COL: Lack of courage to admit error/failing leads subordinates to hide information that superiors should know because the subordinate fears for his career.

CPT: Far too many majors and lieutenant colonels turn out to be "yes" men for the purposes of receiving a good report.

MAJ: Staff officers and Bn COs distort reports to either justify their existence or perpetuate their own careers.

LTC: Dishonesty has been forced upon a great portion of the Officer Corps in rendering efficiency reports, and the junior grade officers can see this and don't like or understand the reason.

LTC: There is a lack of moral courage among raters to give low efficiency reports to those officers that deserve them.

MAJ: . . . The system forces unethical reporting and practices, and punishes variation.

LTC: As a Captain I was ordered to falsify a Unit Readiness Report by changing my company's REDCON after the cutoff date of the report. I refused to falsify the report.

LTC: Juniors are just more realistic. Seniors, except for some generals, tend to lie (on 2715s, AWOL, CMMI), steal (leave status, club bills, checks) and cheat (avoid unpleasant duties, unfair advantage, etc.), and no one makes this an issue.

COL: Perhaps the one trait I have observed in fellow officers most distracting to me is selfish interest, particularly at the expense of others and the military service in general.

CPT: . . . all responses pertain to grades 03 through 05. I feel that officers in these grades are more concerned with protecting themselves than in doing a good job.

CPT: A problem does exist, it is basically one of communications in informing officers of both the standards to be aspired to and minimum acceptable standards. . . .

MAJ: Only when a commander establishes an atmosphere of freedom of expression will he get accurate information and be believed when he gives his reasons.

MAJ: I feel the problem arises from lack of communication between more senior officers and the junior.

COL: Failure to pass on to junior officers results of their suggestions or outright ignoring them.

LTC: There is a general reluctance to face troops and present a cogent rationale for what has to be done.

MAJ: More emphasis must be placed on pressing ranking officers to listen as well as speak.

LTC: There is a crying need for majors through generals to do a better job of communicating with their subordinates on a very personal basis.

LTC: Keeping the commander and subordinates informed is essential in any military organization. Junior officers are reluctant to discuss problems with senior officers.

MAJ: Loyalty to subordinates gets largely lip service in the Army today. Too many colonels and generals appear to want all junior officers to suffer like they did.

CPT: Loyalty seems to be a one-way street to some senior officers.

COL: Patience with and responsibility toward subordinates needs to be stressed at the highest levels. We still treat our junior officers and enlisted men as things rather than as people.

MAJ: Many senior officers feel that it isn't in their job description to help their juniors when needed.

MAJ: It has been my experience that the young officer of today has very little loyalty to his organization and to a degree to the entire Army.

CPT: The apparent subservience of senior commanders to public relations and the obvious fear of congressional rebuke results in countless instances of either senseless directives or failure to support subordinates.

MAJ: Many officers possess a twofold standard of loyalty, one to the commander's face, the other behind his back.

CPT: The subordinate who even suspects that his superior "gives a damn" for him will give, without demand, more "followship" than a leader ever dared hope for.

CPT: The Army fails to allow a man the opportunity to learn through his mistakes. Too many commanders axe the junior officer who makes one mistake.

## APPENDIX B

Selected questions and comments from officers surveyed during the 1984 U.S. Army War College study on Army professionalism.<sup>12</sup>

Question #1: What are the professional standards or ideal values which traditionally have been set forth for the Army officer?

### Comments:

"Duty-Honor-Country"

"Service, Integrity, Patriotism"

"commitment to country, soldiers"

"personal value system"

"complex and changing, no one set"

"founded upon the Bible"

"standards are set by first company commander"

"leader is responsible for his unit"

"democratic heritage"

"notion of self-policing"

"be technically proficient"

"lead by example"

"ideal standards listed on DA Form 67-8"

"individuals have developed own set of standards"

"the Principles of Leadership"

"dedication"

"standards must be brought into the Army by each"

"ethically and morally straight"

"subordinate personal interests to those of country, unit"

"integrity - won't compromise his standards, won't lie,  
will do those things that are right, just and fair"

Question #2: What are the actual standards--and, if differences exist between the ideal and the actual, what are they?

Comments:

"some officers lie at times by failing to submit accurate reports--USR, dining facility reports, range certifications when clearing ranges"

"some officers practice situational ethics"

"'can-do' attitude in all things causes misuse of some resources"

"zero defects expected. Army is very unforgiving--causes pressure on officer to compromise"

"careerism and survivalism"

"self-interest of individual. System rewards how good an individual looks."

"system rewards 'ticket-punching'--must be Bn XO or S3 to be selected for Bn command"

"honesty, integrity--appears to less honesty among senior officers"

"senior officers not being held accountable"

"S3s filling in squares on training requirements"

"seniors are willing to compromise their standards to make their careers look good--a careerist approach among senior officers"

"the system causes fear of failure, resulting in unethical actions"

"different standards for officers"

"officers do not have a private life"

"behavior set by standards for promotion rather than ethical or moral standards"

"OPMS--does not track with ideal standards--drives careerism"

"we pad the budget to get what we need"

"double standard for the successful"



"OERs--up or out system causes inflated reports"

"when pushed for quotas, people will lie"

"careerism--we don't remain in the job long enough to  
learn it"

"some officers progress at the expense of others--  
subordinates"

"things done to impress the higher ups"

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